

Message Text

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ACTION CU-04

INFO OCT-01 NEA-05 ADP-00 LAB-02 SIL-01 CIAE-00 INR-10

NSAE-00 RSC-01 USIA-12 /036 W
----- 079050

R 281137Z AUG 73

FM AMEMBASSY COLOMBO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9949

C O N F I D E N T I A L COLOMBO 2171

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: SCUL, CE

SUBJ: IV PROGRAM: FREE TRADE UNIONS IN THE DEVELOPING WORLD

REF COLOMBO 1995, STATE 168804

1. THONDAMAN AND CEYLON WORKER'S CONGRESS (CWC) ARE SENSITIVE ISSUES TO UNITED FRONT (UF) GOVT AND PARTICULARLY TO PM BANDARANAIKE. PRINCIPAL REASONS ARE THAT CWC SUPPORTED RIVAL UNP IN 1970 ELECTION AND THAT CWC HAS NOW JOINED TAMIL UNITED FRONT, SOME MEMBERS OF WHICH STRONGLY ADVOCATE ESTABLISHMENT OF SEPARATE TAMIL STATE.

2. BECAUSE OF THIS SITUATION AND BECAUSE GSL HAS REGULATIONS REQUIRING ITS APPROVAL OF FOREIGN TRAVEL AND GRANTS TO ITS NATIONALS IN SRI LANKA, DCM INFORMALLY RAISED AFL-CIO INVITATION TO THONDAMAN WITH VERNON MENDIS, DIRGEN, MDFA, ON 22 AUGUST. TRADE UNION CHARACTER OF PROGRAM WAS STRESSED AND USG FUNDING TREATED AS INCIDENTAL.

3. MENDIS IMMEDIATELY STATED MATTER WAS DELICATE. HE SAID DEFENSIVELY THAT PROBLEM WAS NOT REALLY COMMUNAL AS MOST PEOPLE ASSUMED (CWC IS PREDOMINANTLY TAMIL ORGANIZATION), BUT RATHER THAT FOREIGN LABOR GROUPS AND ILO SEEMED TO THINK THERE EXISTED IN SRI LANKA ONLY ONE TRADE UNION AND ONLY ONE TRADE UNION LEADER. THONDAMAN WAS INVITED EVERYWHERE, HE SAID, AND OTHER LABOR UNIONS COMPLAINED.

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4. MENDIS THOUGHT BEST COURSE OF ACTION WOULD BE FOR

EMBASSY TO PRESENT PROPOSAL TO MDFA IN WRITING, WHICH WE
HAVE DONE.
BYRNE

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NNN

Message Attributes

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